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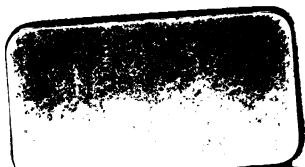
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**DROPS FROM
THE DEEP WELL.**

DROPS FROM THE DEEP WELL:

A SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF SOME OF
THE PARABLES.

BY

W. WELDON CHAMPNEYS, M.A.

RECTOR OF WHITECHAPEL.

Seeleys:

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PREFACE.

Every Minister of Christ is a Steward.

The great Master of the "household of faith" has himself told us what the duty of the spiritual steward is—viz. "to give to *every one* of his fellow-servants his portion of meat in due season."

The great household, over which he has made his Ministers "overseers to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood," contains not only full-grown persons but little children—not only "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil," but those of "tender age."

Now while the "men" require "strong

meat" the "babes" must have "milk;" the "faithful Steward" will see that *both* have the food which they need.

However simple the sermon may be on the Sunday—however clear the medium through which the instruction is conveyed in the House of God; though the language may be, as it always ought to be, pure Bible-English, so that the poorest worshipper can understand the *words* through which, as light through a clear air, the thoughts are conveyed, yet it can scarcely be thought that the *children* attending Church get their "portion of meat" on Sunday. They may pick up some *crumbs*, but scarcely get a *meal*.

They however *want* their meat and they ought to have it. And if they *do not get* it on the Sunday they must get it in the week-day.

Acting on this conviction of their want and my duty, I have endeavoured for many years past (with the help of my fellow stewards) to give the children of our many

Schools *their sermons* each week, and to visit the schools, not to examine their school-work, but to feed them as the children of the household.

The same word of God, which furnishes the meat to the man, supplies the steward with milk for the babe—a portion of that word has therefore been the substance of all our weekly teachings.

Among other portions of scripture, they have been taken through some of the Parables. The plan I have pursued has been first to read a sentence, that the young children, who cannot read might all know it; (the elder ones having their Bibles, New Testaments or Prayer books open at the passage) then “to question it into them” and next “to question *it out of them* ;”—and so pass on to another part of the Parable, till the great, strong, broad lines of the story stood clear and plain before their mind, and the *moral* has been understood and remembered.

In this way the Parables in this little

work have been gone through in all the schools under my own immediate care, and, after a year's interval, have been found to be retained by the children.

This humble attempt to make some of the stories of the great Teacher, who so especially loved little children, plain to their capacities is but like letting the bucket fall on the very surface of that deep well of truth and wisdom, which the Parables present. It may be, however, that a *taste* of the sweet waters of this deep well may, through the Divine blessing, lead some to go for themselves and draw.

Rectory, Whitechapel,
March 12, 1852.

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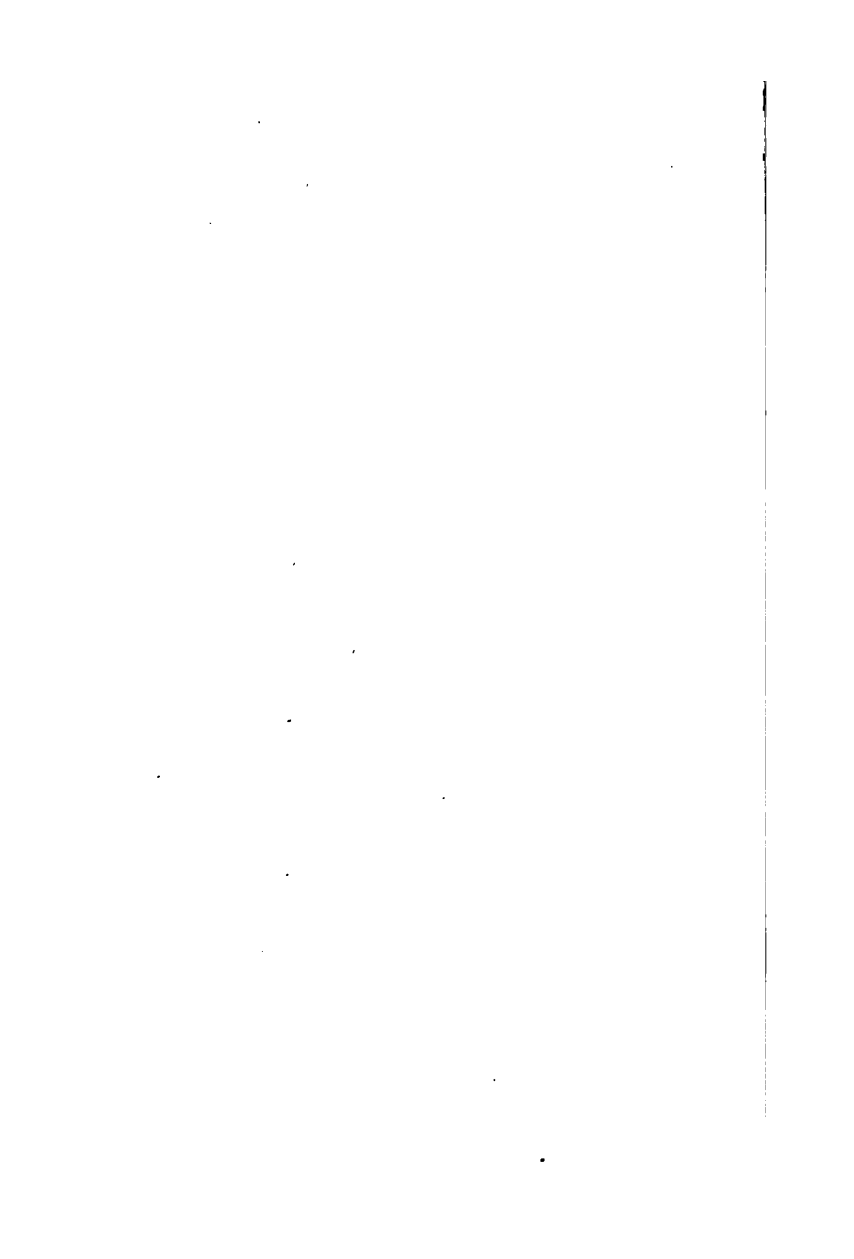
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**DROPS FROM
THE DEEP WELL.**





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THE DEEP WELL.**

DROPS FROM THE DEEP WELL ;

OR,

THE PARABLES EXPLAINED.

A GRECIAN painter once painted a bunch of grapes so well, that the birds were deceived, and thought they were *real* grapes, and flew to pick them. Another painter painted a picture, that looked like a curtain over a picture, and when the first painter came in, he thought it really *was* a curtain, and said,—“Take away the curtain, that I may see the picture.”

Now, suppose, that there was a beautiful picture, covered by a thin, light muslin

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curtain, on which also something was painted, though we might have glimpses of the picture underneath *through* the thin, light, muslin curtain; yet we should say, like the Grecian Painter,—“Take away the curtain and let me see the picture.”

Such a picture, covered with a muslin curtain, would be like a Parable, which is a story covering another—like the painted muslin curtain. We hear the story—and look at it, as we should at the picture painted on the muslin curtain, and we catch glimpses of something underneath, some other thing behind the curtain, some important thing, of which the story is only the veil, or curtain, or covering; and we say—“Take away the veil that we may see the picture.” Remove the story and let me see what is under it—what is meant by it—for we are sure that it is not the painted muslin curtain which we are brought in to see, but the picture—not the story that *seems* told, but *another which is hidden under it: the lessons*, which are below and

beneath the mere covering of words, and which those words are spoken to teach us.

Every one is fond of Parables.

The human mind loves stories, and comparisons ; that is, we like to be taught something which *we do not* know, by means of something which *we do*. We all like pictures: and parables are to the mind, what pictures are to the eye ; they are like two pictures—an upper and an under one, and the one at the surface makes us want to see the one at the bottom. We all like stories. We hear the story, are pleased with it ; and our fancy, which is our mind's painter, soon paints a picture of whatever we hear, and hangs it up in our memory-room, and fills it with such paintings, like a picture-gallery. For God gives us our fancy, (or imagination) that we might have images of things in our minds, as well as pictures of things in our eyes ; for we really *have* a picture of every thing we see painted inside our eyes.

There is a beautiful, fine, network cur-

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tain, called "the retina," (or "network,") hung up at the back of our eyes, on which everything we see is actually painted very small. If we could look into our eyes, when we stand on the top of some high hill—such as the Worcestershire beacon, or the Malvern hills, from which, parts of fourteen counties may be seen ; we should actually see the whole of that beautiful landscape painted on the network curtain of our eye—every tree, road, house, field, all painted on the little tiny round curtain.

Now, Parables are pictures painted on the mind, and we are all pleased :—first, when we look at the painted muslin curtain—I mean the story itself ; and still more when the curtain is lifted up and we see *the picture*, that is, the lessons which the story is meant to teach us.

The miracles of our Lord struck multitudes with astonishment, and when these "great multitudes were gathered together, He spake unto them by parables." His parables were like a sieve to sift those mul-

titudes, and separate the wheat from the chaff, so that while the wheat remained behind, because it was heavy and solid, the chaff flew off, because it was light, and easily blown away. All the multitude *heard* the mere story, and were pleased with it, but all did not *understand* it—and many, perhaps the greater number, did not *wish* to understand. But there were some who *did*; and these, if they saw *something* of the meaning, if they caught a glimpse of the picture under the veil, and through the curtain—as the Jews caught a glimpse of Moses' face, shining and sparkling through *his* veil—wished to see the picture itself, that is, to know all our Saviour meant; and these earnest, honest, attentive hearers would come to Christ, and ask him "What might this parable mean;" and *they* became his disciples, and scholars, and followers. Thus our Lord's parables sifted the multitudes, and brought out the chaff from the wheat.

They were also a way of conveying re-

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proof, without those, who were reproof, being able to stop the reproof, or prevent its being given, or openly finding fault because it had been given. If the proud Pharisees and priests had been openly told by our Saviour that they were dishonest and unfaithful men, who kept back what they ought to have given to God, and would murder God's own Son, they would not have listened to him long enough to hear it out—they would have stopped their ears, and have run upon him, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him, as they afterwards stoned Stephen, and so killed him before his time; but when He told them the story of the husbandmen in the vineyard not sending the fruits, and ill-treating the servants who came for the fruit, and then killing the king's son, they could not prevent our Lord from finishing the Parable, nor conveying to them and to the people the important truth He wished to convey; viz., that as they had ill-treated God's

prophets, so they would ill-treat and put to death God's own Son.

Have you ever seen a chain-shot? It is two large shots or cannon-balls chained together, by a chain in the middle, so that they cannot go separately, or one without the other. Now, sometimes two thoughts or images in the mind get thus fastened together, by what is called "association," so that when one idea comes into the mind, the other at once comes with it; and these ideas or thoughts, thus chained together, never come separately or alone—the one always brings the other with it. Thus, for example, the sight or smell of some particular flower, brings to our remembrance the *persons* who happened to be with us when last we saw that flower, or the *very things* we were thinking of, while we looked at it; and we never see that flower, or smell its sweetness all through our life, without having the same thoughts immediately brought into our minds, as we had when we saw or smelt it the first time.

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Our blessed Saviour, who "knew what was in man," and knows our frame, "for He made us"—"we are the clay, and He is the potter, and we are the work of his hands,"—made use of this wonderful power of our mind, to link and fasten things and thoughts together, speaking in his Parables. He wished to join spiritual instruction with the commonest objects, and the things which were continually met with in the daily walks of life, with holy, good, and useful thoughts, and so to make the fields, and trees, and sea, so many remembrancers of God. Thus, the people who had heard Christ speak the Parable of the Sower, and had attended to what they heard, and understood it, could never see a field being sown, all the rest of their life, without thinking of the different kinds of persons who hear the word of God. Every hard *pathway* would look to their eyes like the hard heart on which the seed of God's word lies, but into which it never sinks;—every *rock* with a little thin covering of mould

upon it, would speak to them of those, who have an appearance and promise of good, but never have had "the heart of stone" taken away;—every piece of *thorny ground* would remind them of those whose hearts are taken up with the cares of the world, and so never "bring fruit to perfection;"—the thin green "blade," often looking like grass in the spring, would speak of grace begun; "the ear," of grace grown;—"the full corn in the ear," bending with its own weight, would seem to them the old and ripe believer, full of good works, and yet bending in humility towards the earth, ripe for the earth, and ready for the sickle.

Every vine they saw would tell those who had heard Christ speak the story of the vine—of Christ and his servants being one;—the gardener cutting off some barren boughs, and throwing them as worthless rubbish, on the ground, as fit for the dunghill, would warn them of the end and punishment of barren Christians,—the pruning of the fruitful boughs, the cutting out

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the useless wood and unnecessary leaves, and over-abundant tendrils, would tell them of the need we all have of afflictions and troubles, which, by cutting off what would or might draw away our sap, make the good Christian more fruitful in every good word and work. The fisherman would never cast his net into the sea, nor draw his fish on shore, nor sit down on the sandy beach to pick out the good fishes and throw away the worthless ones, without thinking of the great division at the last dreadful day. The mistress of the house, or her servant, would never put the leaven into the meal, nor eat the light and wholesome leavened bread, without thinking of that holy principle which can alone thoroughly change and lighten our whole body, soul and spirit. Thus, the commonest duties of daily life—the objects which every day meet the eye, would be in this, so closely joined with good instructions and holy lessons, that the one would never come without the other.

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And who ever spoke such Parables—so exactly suited to every case—so simple, and yet so deep, at once shallows in which lambs could wade, and depths in which elephants must swim—so plain, and yet so spiritual—so much within the reach of the humblest and simplest seeker after truth, and yet so far "above and out of sight" to the careless and unconcerned? Who ever spoke such Parables—in the midst of all "the contradictions of sinners"—the snares laid to catch up his words, and find something for which to accuse him. Who ever so spoke—on the moment, without having time to consider—and this too, one, who had "never learned," and yet "knew letters,"—and gave power to others to speak almost like himself. Surely, when the officers who were sent to lay hold on Christ, came back to their masters, and when asked, "why have ye not brought him?" replied, "never man spake like *this man*," they only said the simple truth; and we can repeat the words of the Centu-

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rion, when he stood by the cross of this blessed Man, Christ Jesus, when he saw the sun darkened—the earth shaking—the rocks splitting—and said,—“ Surely this *Man* was the *Son of God*.”

THE PEARL.

MATTHEW XIII. 45, 46.

THE kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls : who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

ALL men are seeking happiness. It is as natural to man to seek after it, as for a bee to seek honey : but, if the bee were to seek for honey where it could find nothing but poison, it must die itself of the very flowers from which it seeks to draw sweetness. Man's never-dying spirit cannot find happiness anywhere but in God. The golden eagle, that loves to soar in the high, pure, sunny air above the mountains, and makes its nest "in the tops of the rocks, and the holes of the ragged rocks," cannot be happy

in a wooden cage ; neither can man's soul, which was *meant* to soar upwards to God, be happy anywhere but in that pure heaven, in which God made it to live, and in the cheering beams of the Sun of Righteousness. These men are like "the merchantman seeking goodly pearls ;" but it is a vain thing to look for them in the mud, or in the barren, sandy desert. Pearls must be sought where they are to be found, or men will seek for them in vain.

A Pearl is a beautiful jewel, which grows in the oyster. It is thought by some that the wonderful juice, which lines the oyster-shell, and hardens into that smooth, polished, rainbow-coloured substance, called Mother-of-pearl, also forms the pearl itself, when it is lodged by the fish round some small grain of sand or gravel, which has found its way into the shell. So that the oyster is the 'Mother of the pearl,'—the pearl is, as it were, the child of the oyster. These pearl-oysters, or oysters in which the pearl is found, are brought up from the

bottom of the sea, chiefly off the coast of Ceylon, by divers; and according to their size is their value..

Now, when "a merchantman who is seeking goodly pearls," hears of some place where "*one pearl*" of great beauty and value is to be seen, he goes to that place, "and sells all he has and buys that pearl." He knows that though he is parting with all he has to buy that one precious jewel, he is yet a gainer—because that one pearl is worth much more than all that he has parted with to get it. And so he goes on his way rejoicing, for he has got riches in a small compass, wrapped up in his bosom; and instead of money, that would take chests and carts to carry it, or goods that must be dragged after him in carriages, or houses and lands which he could not take with him at all when he moves about, he has got his riches in one precious pearl, and so can carry them with him wherever he goes.

Now "the kingdom of heaven" is like

this. The Gospel comes to us, who are "seeking goodly pearls," but seeking them in vain—because we are seeking them in the world's market. They bring us pearls, indeed, there to buy, but they are *mock pearls*—a little bubble of glass filled with fish-scales, is all that is wanted to make a false pearl—and though it *looks well* at a distance, yet it crushes and crumbles into powder when we squeeze and press it tightly in our hands, and we see nothing left but a little worthless dust that a breath blows away. So are the pleasures of the world; and those who seek for happiness in any thing that the world can give, will only have such *false* pearls instead of true ones to shew, or rather, *not to shew*—for they will be all broken, crushed and blown away.

But the Gospel tell us where "one pearl of great price" is to be had. It tells us OF CHRIST AND HIS SALVATION—of him, who "is more precious than rubies; and to whom all the things we can desire are not to be compared." It tells the sinner who

feels his guilt, how he may obtain *pardon*, even "redemption through *His* blood;" it tells the soul that feels "the plague of his own heart," how he may find grace to change and "transform him by the renewing of his mind," and "make him a new creature in Christ Jesus." The Gospel tells us of this "pearl of great price," and *where* we may find it, even in God's word,—and *how* we may make it our own—by earnest, honest, hearty, persevering prayer. It tells us that if "we incline our ear unto wisdom, and apply our heart unto understanding, yea, if we cry after knowledge, and lift up our voice for understanding; if we seek her as silver, and search for her as hidden treasures, THEN shall we understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

And if we were really to part with all we have, to get this pearl, should we not be gainers? Has not the merchant *got* his money which he has parted with, IN HIS PEARL? And has not the soul *got* all things in Christ? "All things are yours,

if ye are Christ's,"—"Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

Yes, and you shall carry your pearl with you, wherever you go ; it is "*durable* riches,"—it will *last*,—it is *portable* wealth—for you "shall *carry it away with you* when you die." It is *riches in a small compass*—all good things in one—for it is "*the one thing needful*." If you part with all *for this* you will still have all things *in this*—and you "will count all things but loss for the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

Seek then, "this pearl of great price." *Seek* for it in God's Book ;—by reading that blessed Book, it shall be *set* deep in your soul, like a precious jewel in its golden setting ; you shall carry it with you when the spirit leaves all else behind, and while you *have it* on earth you shall also enjoy it in heaven ; and *WEAR* your pearl, in "that day when God maketh up his jewels."

THE POUNDS.

LUKE XIX. 12—27.

A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant : because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be

thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin : For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man : thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow. Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury ? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

How happy must Zaccheus have felt, when he heard our Lord, whom he had so gladly received as a guest into his house, say, "This day is salvation come to this house ;

forasmuch as, (because) he also is a son of Abraham." When he heard those blessed words, did he not rejoice that he had been led to give the half of his goods to the poor?—did he not bless that loving Saviour, whose grace had "made him willing in the day of his power?" But there were some who had heard those words of Christ, who did not understand them; who thought that, because He had said, "*This day* is salvation come to this house," that then "the kingdom of God would *immediately* appear," (v. 11.) Our Saviour saw this thought of their minds afar off—and, in order to remove their mistake, and set them right, and shew them that He would have to go away from earth, and that his servants would have to work while He was gone away, and look for his return, He spoke the Parable, which is commonly known as the Parable of the Pounds.

It is very much like that of the Talents, which we find in the xxvth chapter of St. Matthew, though it was spoken at a dif-

ferent place and time ; for this Parable was spoken when they were "*nigh* to Jerusalem," (verse 11.) that of the Talents when He was *at* Jerusalem. (Matt. xxiv. 1.) In both Parables the servants improve and increase their money, and are rewarded according to the way in which they have increased it. In both, the idle servant who has not worked and traded with his money, tries to excuse himself, and throws the blame upon his master ; and in both, is condemned by his master, from his own words, and out of his own mouth. The chief difference between the two Parables is in the sum of money, which the master lends to his servants. Both Parables seem meant to teach the same lesson, and like repeated blows of a hammer, to fasten the same truth in the heart and memory, as "a nail in a sure place." How much we all need to have "line upon line, precept upon precept:" for we are "fools, and slow of heart to believe," and to remember.

But now let us see the story. "A certain

nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." It was customary in those times and in those countries, for princes, who were dependant on others higher and greater than themselves, to receive their crowns and kingdoms from them : and, perhaps many who heard this story, would remember how Herod had gone to Rome to be confirmed in his power, and to obtain the kingdom.

The nobleman then " called his ten servants, and delivered unto them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come." The pound was worth either seven pounds ten shillings, or nine pounds, of our English money. He lent them the money to trade with, to do business with, and so increase and add to it, for that is the meaning of the word " Occupy,"—" *till* I come"—he said, for he was going to receive a kingdom, and then to return.

" When he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded the servants to be called, to whom he had given

the money, that he might know how much every man had *gained by trading*;" for that was what he wished them to do, when he said, "Occupy." The first had made his one pound into ten. The other had increased his one to five; and each was rewarded according to the increase they had made—according to what they had "*gained by trading*." The one, having authority given him over ten cities, in his master's new kingdom—the other, over five. How vast a reward. "They had been faithful," as their master said, (verse 17.) in a *very little*," in the use of a simple pound: and now they were made rulers, and even kings, under their own king.

But another servant, who had received a pound also, brought his pound to his master just as he had received it from him. "Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou lay-

edst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow."

This was not true—it was most untrue. His kind master had lent him the money, with which he would be able to trade, and therefore *had laid* it down; was it hard then to expect that this servant *should* trade with and increase it?—and if he expected that it should be increased at his return, was he "reaping where he had not (first) sown?" It was not a true charge then. But his master, without saying a word about the untruth of the charge, goes on to condemn the man out of his own mouth, and shews from his own words that he ought to have acted differently, if he really *had* feared him. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." Thou knewest, (or thou *sayest* that thou knewest,) "that I was an austere man: taking up that (which) I laid not down, and reaping that (which) I did not sow." If you did know me to be thus hard as you say, "why did you not give my money into the bank,

that at my coming I might have received mine own with usury?" If you did not care to work my money *yourself*, and trade with it *yourself*, and gain by trading with it *yourself*, why did you not give it to those who *would* have improved it, so that, at my return, I might have received my own with fair increase?

The king then orders the money to be taken away from the idle servant, and given to the one who has already ten pounds, to the surprise of those standing by, who say, "Lord, he *has* ten pounds;" and then orders those, his citizens, who had sent a message (or embassy) after him, when he went to receive his kingdom, (verse 14.) saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," to be "brought and slain before his face."

This is the painted curtain—the story; now let us see the *picture*, that is, what *Christ meant us to learn from it*.

Christ is the Nobleman. He was then going, and is now gone to receive a king-

dom, even that kingdom, which Daniel in vision saw him receive, when he says,—“ I saw in the night-visions, and, behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and A KINGDOM, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Daniel vii. 13, 14.

He is gone “into a far country,” even into heaven itself, above the lower heaven, above the highest stars, and there sits “the King in his beauty, even in the land which is very far off.”

“ And the heavens must receive him, *till* the time of the restitution of all things,” and THEN He will return.

“ His citizens,” the Jews, those whose lawful king he was, being the true and real Son of David, “hated him.” “He came

to his own, and his own received him not ;” and sent a message after him,—“ Not this man but Barabbas.” “ We have no king but Cæsar.” “ The rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against his Christ, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”

“ His servants ” are, especially and particularly, his *Christian* people. The very name, “ Christian,” shews *whose* servants we are. The pound given (or rather LENT,) to each, being the same sum, may, perhaps, shew us that though there may *seem* to be very great differences between one man and another, that there really *is* more equality than we commonly think ; and that, in God’s sight, each man has his pound.

What *is* our pound ? The sum is made up of several pieces. *Memory* is one coin—that wonderful power of our mind, by which we actually live the past over again—and on which even *now* every thing, even the passing shades of thought seem as truly and

firmly fixed as a likeness on the plate of a daguerreotype ; so that perhaps nothing is ever really forgotten, and on which, at the Day of Judgment, we may be sure that the blazing light of eternity will fix all for ever. *Time* is another coin, that goes to make up our pounds, that precious thing, the very broken bits of which are diamond dust, which are useful to polish other things, if they are not large enough to be set as diamonds. *Influence* is another coin ; that is, the power we have over others according to our character. All have *some* that look up to them—all have *some* over whom they have power which they may use for good or evil. *Money* is another coin ; often “ the mammon of unrighteousness,”—*got by* unrighteousness, and *used for* unrighteousness. These, and such-like, are the coins that make our pound.

To use these rightly is to “ Occupy ” them—to trade with, to improve them. He who *lends them to us all*, will *reckon with us all* at his return, for the use we

have made of them. And how *may* we use them rightly ? When we store our memory with useful, profitable, holy things, "the texts and doctrines of God," *then* we "occupy" our memory. When we use our time so that not the smallest particle of it is lost or wasted ; when we "take care of the *minutes*," being sure that, if we do so, "the hours and days will take care of themselves,"—when we think that day lost in which we have done no *good*, and that time lost, in which we have been doing *nothing*, then we "occupy" our time. And when we use our influence to defend the cause of Christ, and to assist his people and friends, we "occupy" our influence. And when we use our money as not our own but God's ; relieving his poor, and helping his Gospel, then we "occupy" our money.

And when "the Lord Jesus shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, and He shall sit on the throne of his glory ;" although no man will be re-

warded FOR his works—as a matter of *debt*—as if he *deserved* it ; (because it was “God who worked in him ” effectually, “both to will and to do, of *his* good pleasure ; ” and in truth, HE wrought all our works in us,) still, He *will* reward every man ACCORDING to his works ; and give to those who have “gained the most by trading ” with their pounds, the greatest reward.

But where will the idle and unprofitable servant be in that day ? Will he *then* say “that God is an austere, hard master, requiring us to do that which He will not enable us to do ? ” Will he say then, “God commanded me to repent, and yet told me that He alone could make me repent,—He required me to believe, and yet said that faith was the gift of God.” Will the idle professor be able to say this *then* ? No ! he will be “speechless,” he will have nothing to say—for he will then see what he *will* not see now, that God hath “exalted his Son to GIVE ” that repentance which He *requires* of all them that pray for it,

and BESTOW that saving faith which He *enjoins* on all that diligently seek for it. THEN "God will *be true*," and the idle, and unprofitable servant will be found to be "the *liar*."

Let us then try to *use, work, improve* our pounds—in God's sight, to have and not to use is not to have—the miser, with his chests full of idle gold, in God's sight "*has not*" the gold, which he *will not use*, but only "*seemeth* to have it;"—and from that man shall be taken away even that (which) he hath;" while the man that is faithful in very little *here* shall "sit with Christ on his throne, when He cometh to his kingdom."

THE TEN VIRGINS.

MATTHEW XXV. 1—13.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them : But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so ; lest there be not enough for us and you : but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the mar-

riage : and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

It is still the custom among the eastern nations, as it was among the Jews, for the bridegroom to come home with his bride in the evening, or at night, attended by a train of friends and servants carrying lights. Such is the custom to this day among the Hindoos, and pictures may be seen of such marriage procession, reaching a great length, and with many hundred lights. It has been said, that among the Jews there were not less than ten bridesmaids on occasion of a marriage. The "lamps" were not like what we call lamps in England, but they were more like torches; they were formed of a stock of iron, wrapped round at the top with tow, and the tow being moistened with oil, and then set on fire, burnt with a brilliant flame, and gave a

brilliant and cheerful light ; but unless it was *kept moist* by continual supplies of oil, it was likely to burn out soon.

Ten young women, the bridesmaids, went out with their "lamps," to meet the bridegroom, and bring him to his house at night. "Five of these were wise, and five foolish. The foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them." They were thoughtless and improvident—they did not look forward—they did not consider for the future, nor think beyond the present moment—they had got their lamps, and they were lighted, and blazed brightly, and that was enough for them—they did not think that if the bridegroom did not come directly, [their lamps would have burnt out for want of more oil. The other five were "wise," thoughtful, prudent, considerate, provident, caring for the future, thinking for the time to come, looking beyond the present. They thought that the bridegroom might not come immediately, and if he *did not*, their torches would want more oil : and so

"*they* took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

The Bridegroom *did* "tarry," he was a long time before He came; they all got tired *with* waiting, and perhaps some got tired *of* waiting; and they began to "slumber," and take a little sleep, and then they woke, and then they "slept" again, until they all fell fast asleep. While they were thus lying on the ground fast asleep, "at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." This cry awoke them—they all started up, and looked at their lamps, which were all burning dimly, and those belonging to the foolish ones were going out because they had not been moistened with any fresh oil before they were overtaken by sleep. So they "arose, and trimmed their lamps;" the "wise virgins" poured some oil in theirs, out of their vessels, and shaped the tow, so as to make it burn brightly, and were soon ready; so that, although at first they were a little surprized and confused

by the cry that awoke them, yet they were ready. But the foolish were not; they also wished to trim their lamps—but how could they trim a lamp without oil—and oil they had none with them—they had forgotten that, they had not thought of that; so they said to the others, “Give us (some) of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,” or going out. The flame was flickering and just going out with the next puff of wind, or else it was just gone out, and nothing could be seen but the thick smoke rising from their useless torches. But the wise had not brought oil for them as well as for themselves. Each one had only got enough for herself. They answered, therefore, they could not, “Lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather,” said they, “to them that sell, (oil) and buy for yourselves.” This was not selfish or unkind, but only just and prudent; it would not have been right to have given their own oil away, and by so doing have their own torches go out. So, while the others were

gone to buy oil, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. The poor, thoughtless, improvident, imprudent virgins went to get oil, but "midnight," the dead of night, was not a good time to go, nor a likely time to *get* oil; the places, where in the day-time, it might have been got, were all shut up and closed. They, therefore, went to the door of the Bridegroom's house, and knocked, and called, "Lord, Lord, open (the door) unto us." But they called in vain. The Bridegroom did not know who they were. His friends who came with him, and his bridesmaids who came out to meet him, had all gone in with him; and as for those who stood outside he did not know who they might be, but He was *sure they were not his* FRIENDS. So He said,—“Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” So the poor, thoughtless, careless virgins were shut out from the marriage, and while they could see it was all bright

inside the house, they were left in darkness and weariness on the *outside*.

This is the story—the painted outside veil ;—now let us take away the veil and see the picture. Let us see what our Lord Jesus *means* by this story.

“ THEN,” says He, “ shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins.” *What time* does He speak of when he says, “ Then ? ” When *He* comes again the second time, to judge the world ; this is the time of which He speaks—and the state of his Church, that is, of those “ who profess and call themselves Christians,” shall be like that of these ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the Bridegroom. For Christ is the Bridegroom, his true, believing and obedient people are his bride ; and as the Bridegroom brings his bride home on the wedding-day, to live in his house, and be his companion, and share his happiness and his honour and his riches ; even so, when Christ shall come, He will take his own people, “ adorned as a Bride

for her husband," with "the garments of salvation, and the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints," and "the ornament of grace," to live with him for ever, and "sit with him on his throne;" and "behold his glory," and share it with him; and "as the Bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so will (Christ) the Lord God rejoice" over his own dear redeemed people, for ever.

All Christians say and *profess* that they are looking for, and expecting Christ's second coming. To be a Christian is to "go out to meet the Bridegroom;"—to call ourselves Christians, is to "take up our lamp or torch." Every one who saw those virgins with their lamps, knew *by* their lamps that they were, or wished to be thought, the Bridegroom's friends; and so to go to Church and worship Christ is the same thing as if we said, "We are Christ's friends. We are going out to meet him—we believe that He will come again, and we are looking for his coming!"

But when He *does* come, He will not find *all* that thus *say* that they are his friends, and *say* they are looking for his coming, *ready for it*. Some will be like "the foolish," and some like "the wise virgins."

A lamp without oil to feed it, soon goes out; a lamp that *has* gone out is worthless when light is wanted. "A name to live" is worthless when "life" is wanted; to be *called* a Christian is not what Christ wants, but for us *to be so*. A heart without real grace is a lamp without oil—unless the love of God in Christ is in our heart—unless the Spirit of Christ dwell in us—leading us to pray for more grace, and for fresh grace, for every day—our lamp is *only* a lamp, but we have no "oil in our vessels with our lamps."

The foolish virgins did not look forward,—they thought not of the future—they thought only of the present; and the foolish Christian does the same. He does not really prepare for death and judgment—for

they are the same thing to him, as Christ's second coming. He does not try to be every-day in such a state as that if he should die at once, and without warning, he should be ready and fit to die. He does not try to live in continual prayer to God, nor to "set God always before him;" nor to live as if He "saw Him who is invisible," and thus to "continue in the fear of the Lord, all the day long." It is enough for him to *seem* to be a Christian—for men to *think* him so—and to *think himself* to be so. So he has a lamp, but no oil—a flaming torch, that may blaze for a while but will not last—and which *must* go out—and be out, when it is most wanted.

The wise virgins *did* look forward—they thought that the Bridegroom might tarry—they knew that they should have to wait, and that, if they *did* wait, they should want oil to keep their torches burning; and so they "took oil in their vessels with their lamps." And so does the true Christian. He knows that to be *called* a Christian is

only *having* a lamp, and that *to be* a Christian and to *continue* one, and to be ready for the coming of Christ, requires to have oil also—to have grace—“the unction from the Holy One;” he knows that Christ, the Bridegroom, wants the *light* and not the *lamp*; and they *get* that light, and they *feed* it by constant, fervent, secret prayer, which brings fresh oil, fresh grace, every day and every hour, into their souls; keeping the *inward light* burning in their understanding, and conscience, and will, and affections, so that “no part is dark;” and making their *outward light* so shine “before men, that, while they see *their* good works they glorify *their Father which is in heaven.*” These “wise” Christians think that their removal from this world may be sudden, “and that in such an hour as they think not, the Son of man may come;” they therefore, wish, and try to have “their lights always burning,” and *never to be thinking, saying or doing any thing in which they should be afraid to die.*

This is their *wish*. But the air of the world is thick and foggy, like the air of a great city, and heavy, like the air, before a thunderstorm; even good Christians who must go *into* the world, though they "are not *of* the world," feel the influence of the world upon their souls, it makes them sleepy, they are not so wakeful and watchful as they ought to be; and sometimes even *they* not only "slumber," but "sleep." They for a while, forget what they are "looking for, and hastening unto," and why they are come out from the rest of the world, even to meet the Bridegroom.

At last the cry is heard, "The bridegroom cometh." Death draws near—sickness comes—there is no hope of recovery—the physician shakes his head, and says, 'Nothing more can be done.' The soul is brought to feel sure that in a few days or hours it *must* "appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive for the things done in the body;" that it must go to him, "who is no respecter of persons"—with

whom it is nothing what others may have thought of us—or what we may have seemed to be—or what even we may have thought ourselves to be—but only *what we really are*. THEN all awake from their sleep—arise from the ground, and begin to trim their lamps ; but it will not *light* a lamp that has gone out, to *trim* it, and it will not bring grace into a soul that has no true grace, to *find* that it has none. And it may not light again the grace that has been suffered to go out for want of prayer, during the time of Health, to seek it in the time of sickness, and at the point of death. When Cromwell, who had consented to the murder of his king, and signed with his hand the warrant for his execution, sent for his chaplain to his death-bed, and asked, ‘Is it possible that any one who has ever been in a state of grace, can fall away?’ the Chaplain answered, ‘I think it is *not* possible.’ ‘Then I am sure,’ said the dying usurper, ‘that *I* was once in a state of grace.’ Poor Cromwell! *He* was startled

from his sleep by the midnight cry—he *tried* to trim his torch—he found it had gone out, and though he *felt* that he had *fallen* from grace, (for his enquiry seems to shew *that*) he comforted himself with the assurance that he had once had it. ‘My lamp is gone out now, I feel, but I know it was once alight.’

At such an hour the poor soul sends for the minister, or the pious Christian friend, who, was perhaps, thought before to be too strict, too scrupulous, too conscientious, and says, “Give us some of your oil.” ‘O that I had some of your faith in Christ—your hope towards God—your preparation for heaven.’ But can the minister or the Christian friend give what is only enough for himself? Has any one *more* than enough? Has any one faith, love, or hope, *to spare*? The Popish Church may talk of merits, and of some men being so good, as not only to do what they are required, but more of their own free will than is required as necessary to salvation; and they may say, that these

extra good works are put by in the Pope's keeping, and that he can sell them or give them to those who have not enough of their own; but does CHRIST say this, here in this story? Does the Bible say so any where? Has not the Lord himself taught us, that "after we have done all that is commanded us, we are to say, we are unprofitable servants—we have done that which was our duty to do."

But the wise *did* trim their lamps; they were able to do so, because they had oil.

They had indeed slept—but when they woke, though their lamps were dim, they were not gone out; for they had put oil to them *before* they went to sleep—and now when they awoke they found their oil ready to their hand—they had but to *use* it, not to *get* it; and, in a few minutes, they were ready to go in with their Lord to the marriage. And Christ's true servants do the same when the cry is heard, and they awake to meet their Lord; they have not to *light* their lamp—their faith, and love, and hope,

have never gone out; they have fed them by earnest and continual prayer; they have only to *trim* the lamp—to pour a little more oil on that which has been always kept moist; and, when their soul goes forth from the body, *they die as they have lived*—believing, loving, hoping in Christ, “made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.”

These, and such as these, are the only followers whom Christ will “know.” “The Lord *knoweth* them that are his.” They can now look up to him with a true heart, and say—“Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” To all others, He will say—“I NEVER knew you.”

O let us beware of having only the lamp without the oil—of being *called* Christians, but not being so; lest we be shut out with the sinners and the hypocrites from “the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

O let us then not “sleep as do others, but watch and be sober;” “and that knowing the time, that now it is high time to wake out of sleep—for the night is far spent.”

THE LEAVEN.

MATTHEW XIII. 33.

THE kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

WE shall understand this Parable, by seeing first, *what it is* that causes the change in the meal, which is called, leavening, and what *the change itself is*.

In our country we make use of yeast, or *barm*,--to leaven the bread. In the east, they use a piece of paste, which from its having been let to stand, has got in it the same quality, which is in the yeast or *barm*. This piece of paste is "hidden" in the meal, and the quality which is in the paste spreads into the meal—and at last goes quite through it, till the whole of it

is "leavened." "The kingdom of heaven" is spiritual leaven—leaven of the soul; for it is meant to cause a change in man's heart, and in the world at large—like that which the leaven works in the "meal." "The kingdom of heaven" is the principle of the Gospel—"the spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

This principle is brought into the soul by God's word, and God's spirit—"for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Directly a man or child "knows, and believes the love that God hath to him," he begins "to love God, *because* God first loved him—and because he loves God, he begins to obey him"—and to hate sin, because it is the abominable thing which God hates; and to "deny himself," and copy Christ. As the leaven cannot be in the meal without working there, so faith cannot be in the heart without "working by love." A new principle has been "hid within the heart," by the hand of God—something that was not there *before* is there *now*—and it will go on work-

ing till the whole is leavened. And then, when a man's soul is like the leavened piece of paste, having the new principle of spiritual life in itself, it will act upon others—the true Christian cannot *be in* the world, without acting *upon* the world—"ministering that grace," to those who see and hear; both by his behaviour, and by his words; which he has himself received, and which has "transformed him by the renewing of his mind."

Now let us see *the change that is made* in the meal, by putting in the leaven; and in the heart of a man, and on the world at large, by the spiritual leaven—the grace of God through the Gospel. What a dead, heavy, unwholesome lump, the *dough* is before it is leavened! What a dead, useless, unprofitable thing, man's heart is before it is leavened! What a mass of stagnation and sin, the world would be without the Gospel—just as the earth *was*, "without form, and void," and darkness was on the face of the deep, "*before* the Spirit of God

moved upon the face of the waters." But when the leaven is put into the meal, it begins to *ferment*—to work—to rise—to swell :—quietly indeed—silently—slowly—but still it is at work ; there is life there, where there was no life before ; a new principle has been put in ; it spreads from particle to particle ; it works on till "the little leaven has leavened the whole lump." So when "the grace of God in truth," is in the heart—when the Gospel has come "not in word only," but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, it sets the heart working, like the meal ; it makes the understanding, before dark, to be light, and to see "the exceeding sinfulness of sin ;" it sets the *conscience* at work to *feel* the guilt of sin ; it sets the *will* at work "to refuse the evil, and choose the good ;" it goes on working "till it has brought every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," and it *will* go on working, till "the whole spirit, soul, and body," are perfectly leavened.

And *now* look at the bread ; it was once a dull, heavy, dead lump of thick unwholesome dough ; now it is light, honey-combed, sweet, wholesome. The new principle, the leaven, has entirely changed its character—altered its nature and qualities ; and yet it is the same meal, the same flour, but so differently arranged and disposed, as to be a new thing.

Look at a Christian—there is God's leavened bread—leavened by the Spirit of Life—ONCE “foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, hateful, and hating others ;” a mere lump of earth and sin, now “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly and righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Once like the run-away slave of Philemon—“unprofitable ;” now a true Onesimus—“profitable to many.” Such a Christian, when mixed, like the paste, in the meal, that is, the world, will be the means of imparting to others what God has imparted to him—and will no more be in the world in vain,

than the leaven will be in the lump in vain. Are *you* a piece of God's leaven? Has his Spirit *begun* to leaven *you*? Is the Spirit strongly set against "and overcoming the flesh," teaching "you to deny yourself, and follow Christ?" Ask this of your soul. For if you are not spreading God's leaven, you are dispersing Satan's poison; you are one of those "children that are corrupters." But may this not be. Rather "I pray God that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

THE MUSTARD SEED.

MATTHEW XIII. 31, 32. MARK IV. 30—32.

WHEREUNTO shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it ? The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field : which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth : but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, and becometh a tree ; so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Would you not be very much surprized to hear of a *mint* or *thyme-tree* so large, broad, strong and high, that a man might climb up into it, and the birds of the air actually should roost in the boughs of it ? You would say,—‘ what—could a *herb* grow

thus? and a *pot-herb* become a tree? could a thing spring from a little seed like powder, increase to such a size?' In our northern, cold country it could not be, but in the warm Eastern land, in which Christ lived and taught, such a thing *could* be, and such a thing *was*.

"The mustard-seed is indeed the smallest of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among *herbs*, and becometh a tree, so that the fowls of the air lodge in the branches thereof."

The mustard-*seed* is the least among the seeds, and yet, the "herb" that springs from that seed, grows to be the greatest among herbs—so great as to be a *tree*; and we are told that a Jewish Rabbi had one in his garden, into which he used to climb and where he used to sit.

What could be a smaller seed than the Christian Religion, when it was first sown in the world? Whether we look at the *persons* with whom it began, or the *doctrine* which they taught, how small and unlikely

were both to grow into any size upon the earth.

Christ himself was but a poor man outwardly; his mother, though lawfully and directly of the royal family of Judah and a daughter of the house of David, was yet so poor that a stable was the only room which they could find her, and a manger the only cradle in which she could lay her first-born Son. And Christ, though the Son of God, yet "grew up before him as a root out of a *dry* ground; he had no form or comeliness; and when men saw him, he had no beauty that they should desire him." He was reckoned the son of a carpenter, and was Himself called "the carpenter;" so that the Emperor Julian, who had once professed to be a Christian, but had turned to be a bitter enemy and malicious persecutor of the Christians; when he wished to taunt and sneer at a Christian soldier in his army, said, 'What is your carpenter doing now?' meaning Christ. 'He is making your coffin,' said the soldier; and the Emperor was

killed in that very war, to which he was then marching, and as he died, said, as it were addressing Christ,—‘ O Galilean ! thou hast conquered ! ’

The very *place* where the Lord was brought up, Nazareth, was so looked down on by the Jews, that a good man, “ an Israelitè indeed,” as Christ Himself called him, asked,—“ Can any good thing come out of *Nazareth* ? ” The *country* in which He chiefly lived, and where He did most of his mighty works, was so despised, that the proud Councillors said,—“ Search and look, for out of *Galilee* ariseth no Prophet ; ” (which was not strictly true, as Jonah came from Gath-Hepher, a town of Galilee). Thus poor and despised—as the son of a carpenter—Himself a carpenter, from a town and country held in contempt by the Jews—sneered at by the covetous—looked down on by the proud—hated by the wicked—and, at last dying on the cross, the disgraceful, painful death of a robber, “ reckoned among the transgressors,” could

there be a smaller "seed" for a great "tree" to spring from than Jesus of Nazareth? Could any one be a more unlikely person to found a new, a great, a wide-spread religion, than this despised and rejected man? Could any thing be more unlikely to change the whole world, than the history of this man's public *execution*? (for that it was). And yet from that little, from that least of all "seeds" has that great tree sprung; in "the branches of which" the birds of the air lodge and roost. "The story of the cross,"—the history of this blessed Saviour's cruel death for us, in our place, instead of us, has spread throughout the earth. In thirty years after he had "suffered," for us men and our salvation; after he "had by his one offering of Himself, once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world"—within thirty years of his going up to heaven—his apostles, a few poor fishermen, a Publican, (a custom-house officer), and others of the

same class—and disciples, almost all *poor* men, like their Master—had preached the Gospel, “the story of Peace,” throughout the whole of the world, as it was then known. So that “it was in all the world, and brought forth fruit since the day man heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth.” (Col. i. 6.)

And *now*, though bad men and evil spirits have done all they could to destroy the seed first, and next, to prevent the tree from growing, still it grows; though some Roman Emperors have tried to cut its roots with the axe and the sword, by destroying the Christians; still like the pomegranate tree, which the gardener cut all but through to make it bear, it has only grown the more for the pruning and cutting. The blood of the martyrs has been the nourishing of the Church; and for *one branch* cut off, *twenty boughs* have sprung up. Though Popery has tried to burn it down, and piled the faggots round it, still, like some American forest set on fire by the Indians, the fire

has only burnt up the *brushwood* that had run up round it, while it has scarcely smoked the *tree*—and the vegetation has only grown the faster and the thicker afterwards, for the very burning.

And this tree still grows, and still stands, and *will stand*, till it has “stretched its branches to the (utmost) sea, and its boughs” reach the farthest “rivers,” and till every soul of man has been overshadowed by its arms,—for “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

MATTHEW XIII. 24—30.

THE kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

How surprised the servants of this householder must have been, when they saw the tares springing up among the wheat—and that too, just at the time when the little, tender, green “blade of corn, which at first looked only like a large blade of grass, was beginning to swell out into” the “ear,” and promised to become soon “the full corn in the ear.”

They knew that their master had “sown nothing but good seed in his field,” and could not understand how the tares had come there. *They* did not know; for “while men slept,” the enemy had done it. But the *master* was sure *who* it was that had sown the tares. You, perhaps, think it strange that the servants should not have been commanded to root up the tares at once, and cannot understand how the master should say “No, you must not, lest you should root up the wheat with them.” You think that the servants would at once see which were tares and which was wheat, and would thus be able easily

to pull up the one, without hurting the other. But the eastern tares are not like what we call here tares, or vetches. They are a weed so *very much like* wheat, that at first sight they cannot be known from the wheat, especially when the wheat is young and green, and before the meal is formed in the grains. Many a thin, lean, ear of corn would have been pulled up by the servants, and thrown away as a tare, and, perhaps, some large flourishing tare would have been thought to be wheat, and allowed to remain. Therefore, the master told them "to let *both grow together* till the harvest." THEN it would be clearly seen which was wheat and which were tares. The one would be full of grains, and the grains plump, full, ripe, golden, ready for the sickle, the other, dry, withered, empty, fit only for the oven. Then the reapers would be able to know and divide the one from the other. *This world* is like that field. The good and the bad, "the children of the kingdom, and the children of the wicked

one," are all growing in it together. Those who shall be "heirs of salvation," for whom God has "prepared a kingdom, from the foundation of the world:" who shall live in eternal glory with their Saviour and their God; and those who are children of the devil, "all liars, all who do not righteousness, and every one that loveth not his brother;" these are all living in the same world, breathing the same air, the same common daily mercies fall upon them, as the morning dew or rain upon both wheat and tares, and are poured out like the sunbeams, "both upon the just and the unjust." But "the servants of the householder" cannot distinguish the children of God, from the children of the wicked one: and if they could *know* them one from the other, could not *separate* them in this life. Men may kneel together in the same family, worship in the same Church, and yet some of them may be God's own children, and others, children of the devil; but sometimes, and indeed, often, none but God can tell

which is the one, and which is the other. There is many a true Christian at heart, who, from a naturally bad or rough temper, or weak and ailing body, though he has real grace, the true *meal* in his soul, and is God's wheat, yet might be thought to be one of the tares; and there is many a naturally kind, gentle, mild person, who might seem to be wheat, but who, because he has no love to God and Christ in his heart, and does not try to please Him, and is not led by His Holy Spirit, *is* a tare. The *servants* might mistake these, and if they could *know* them, yet the tares and the wheat, the good and the bad, get their roots so twisted and interwoven together, by being children of the same parents, or living in the same house, or having the same connexions, that *in this world* they could scarcely be divided. But *the householder* "knows them that are His." He "sees the heart," and "knows what is *in* man," and at the end of the world, "when the harvest of the earth is fully ripe," HE "will

say to the angels, the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them ; but gather the wheat into my barn."

Dear child, are you at this moment wheat or tare ? Do you love God ? Do you trust in Christ ? Do you try to do what the Holy Spirit tells you ? Are the sun of righteousness and the dew of God's blessing, ripening the meal in you, and forming that "fruit which is unto eternal life ?" Oh ! ask yourself these questions, for, if you are God's child, the day of harvest will be a day of joy to you, for it will gather you into the garner of your God.

THE SOWER.

MATTHEW XIII. 4. MARK IV. 4—8.

LUKE VIII. 5—8.

HEARKEN ; Behold, there went out a sower to sow his seed. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air came and devoured them up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth ; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth : but when the sun was up, it was scorched ; and because it had no root, it withered away ; because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased ; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

ON the shores of the sea of Galilee, or Lake of Gennesareth, a great multitude of persons were gathered together; they stood by the water's edge, or sat along the banks, that shelved upwards from the sea. In a little fishing-boat, at a small distance from the shore, sate Jesus. The poor people were "very attentive to hear Him," and "heard Him gladly," for though "He taught them, as one having authority," yet He was so gentle, and so mild, and so full of love, that they listened with pleasure to His words, and felt that "He spake as never man spake." While they were all attention to hear what He might say, He began, and told them the Parable of the Sower. Perhaps, at that very time, if they looked towards the fields, they might have seen the sower actually doing what Jesus was speaking of.

He spoke of four different kinds of ground, of which three were bad, and only one good. And it was not the *sower's* fault that only *some* of the seed, he sowed,

came to fruit, for the *same* sower sowed it *all*; nor was it any difference in the *seed*, that caused some of it to be lost, and only a little to become fruitful, for it was all the *same* seed, and it was all good seed. It was the GROUND, that made the difference: it was the bad ground that ruined the good seed—and it was only the good ground, in which, even the good seed, would grow.

Dear children, how often have you been to Church? perhaps, many times. If you have not been made much better for going, if the love of God and Christ has not been sown in your hearts, if you are not bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God—why is it so? Is it because the minister has not spoken the truth? No. Is it because God's word, which He has spoken, is not good? Oh! no. God's sowers sow God's seed, and that is good *seed*; it is because your hearts are like one of the bad kinds of ground.

Which kind are they like? Let us try and see :—

First, there was the *WAYSIDE*,—that is the side of the *road* or the side of a *path* across the fields; but whichever of these two it was, it was *quite hard, without any earth or mould upon it*. If you throw corn upon a hearthstone, will it go *into* it? No; it will *lie upon it*. So did the corn upon the wayside, and there it was either crushed by the foot of the next passenger, or the birds, hovering about, saw it fall, flew down, and immediately swallowed it up.

How many hard hearts are there, like the wayside; made hard by the continual tread and trampling of vain and worldly thoughts, which, like travellers along a road, are ever passing over them! When persons come to Church with hearts like these, will God's word, the good seed, *sink into* them? How can it? a few grains of the sermon may be thrown *upon* such hearts, but they can no more go *into* them than corn into a

high road. And after they have left the Church the first vain thought tramples upon what they have heard, and crushes it ; and that Evil Spirit who is called "the Prince of the power of the air," who, with his angels, is always hovering about churches, as flocks of birds hover about the lands where they are sowing seed, immediately catches it from their hearts ; they forget what they have heard, and it is *lost*.

Next, there was *the rocky ground*.

This *looked* better than the wayside ; but though it had a thin coating of mould on the *outside*, there was the *hard rock*, as hard as the road, *underneath*. The corn, when it fell on the ground, went in as far as it could ; it *tried* to strike its roots, but it could not, for it was rock and not earth underneath ; the heat of the sun, sent back from the rock, made the corn start up and grow as fast as it would in a forcing-house ; but it had no moisture, because it had "no *deepness* of earth." And the same heat that made it grow too fast, soon dried it up

because it had no moisture ; for the corn must have water to drink, as well as air to breathe, or it will die.

There are many who come to Church, whose hearts are rocky ground. They have kind and amiable dispositions, and good natural feelings, like a thin coat of mould on *the top*, but still they have "the heart of stone" *within*. The Spirit of God, "the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces," has never broken *theirs* ; they do not know what is meant by a "broken and contrite heart." They hear the minister speak of the blessedness of having our sins forgiven—of being at peace with God through Jesus Christ—of serving Him here on earth, and of being with Him hereafter in heaven ; they hear this, and think they should like to be true Christians ; so they "begin to do many things well ;" like Herod, after he had heard John preach,—they begin to talk about religion, and because they *feel* a little sometimes, and know a little, they think they are religious ;

but "the *root* of the matter is not in them," the word of God has not struck its roots into their hearts, for they are still hard; they have never really believed with their hearts "unto righteousness;" "nor received the truth in the *love* of it that they may be saved;" and so, when they are *laughed* at because they profess to be religious, or have to *give up* something they like—or have *any difficulty or hardship* to go through; they begin to grow cold about even the *appearance* of religion; they leave off reading the Bible, and praying—they come seldom to Church, and at last "quite wither," because they have "no *deepness of earth*," that is, no deepness of grace; it *was all outside*—it was only earth thinly scattered on a rock.

The last kind of bad ground was, "*the thorny ground*."

This was neither *quite* hard, like the way-side; nor *hard underneath*, while it looked soft on the outside, like the rocky ground; but there were thorns in it when

the corn was sown, though, perhaps, at that time they were not seen. But, as the corn began to grow, the thorns grew also; and as the corn rose higher the thorns followed it; and as corn wants air that it may breathe, as well as water that it may drink, so, when the thorns rose up round the corn, and crept near it, and clung closely round it, and, as it were, "took it by the throat," the corn was "choked," and "brought no fruit to perfection."

Our hearts, dear children, cannot grow *both* wheat *and* thorns; if thorns flourish, the corn dies. "We cannot serve *both* God and mammon," "We cannot serve *two* masters." If the cares of the world, and desires after other things—if the love of dress, or the love of pleasure, or the love of money, draw away our thoughts, the word of God cannot flourish in our hearts; the thorns will draw off the nourishment from the corn, and we shall "bring no fruit *to perfection*." There *may* be corn, but it will be poor, lean, withered, like that which

Pharaoh saw in his dream, growing by the river. We may not altogether wither away like the corn on the rock ; but He who says,—“ My son, give me thy heart,” will not be satisfied with *part* of it, He must and will have it *all*; for He has said,—“ Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God,” and “ because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

But some are like *good ground*.

“ These are they that receive the word in an honest and good heart.” They are “ *honest*,” they *mean* what they *say*, they are not “ dissemblers with God ; ”—when they come to Church, they really come that they may learn what to know and do, in order to be saved. Their hearts are “ *good*,” not by nature, for no man has a good heart by nature, but by grace ; God’s Holy Spirit has changed them and prepared them like ground for the seed. The Lord has cut up the hard pathway with his gospel plough, or broken the rock by the hammer of his

Spirit, or cut up the thorns by the sharp edge of affliction and trouble ; and the good seed does not lie *on* the heart, but goes *into* it—and does not go a *little* way, but goes *deep* into it—and does not grow *too fast*, but *steadily, slowly, and surely*—they not only hear, but remember,—and not only remember, but understand—and not only understand, but *do*—and not only begin to do but go on doing,—“ go on from strength to strength,”—till the sun, and the rain, and the dews, have ripened it ; till afflictions and mercies have made the soul fit for heaven, and “ then He putteth in the sickle because the harvest is ripe,” and gathers it into the garner of God. O Lord God ! give us an honest, good heart, in which thy word may be like seed sown in good ground ; where, being watered by the continual dew of thy blessing, we may bring forth abundantly the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to thy praise and glory.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

MATTHEW XXII. 11—14.

AND when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment : and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment ? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

MANY of Christ's Parables are prophecies ; for He was not only our High Priest, and our King, but our Prophet. Now, the office of a prophet was, both to foretel things to come, and to teach the people : our Lord, therefore, did both these things, and many of His Parables not only contain

most beautiful and striking instruction, but also plainly foretel things to come, so as to be both Parables and prophecies at the same time. This Parable is an instance, and we shall find that it not only *glances back*, and gives a sketch of things that *have been*, but *looks forward* and gives an account of *things that were to be*, some of which, though they were not accomplished when the Parable was spoken, we *now* know to have been accurately fulfilled ; and the rest, which is still to come, is left for our warning, and the warning of those who shall be born after us, even till the end of the world.

The story may be divided into three distinct periods or portions. The *first*, from the 1st verse to the 7th, in which we have described the invitations given to the guests—their behaviour and their punishment. The *second*, from the 8th verse to the 10th, in which we are told who the next guests were, and how invited ; and the *last*, from the 11th to the end, in which

we have set before us the way in which the man was treated, who refused to put on the wedding-garment.

We will take each of these portions by itself, looking, first at the story, and then at its meaning.

A certain king, having made a marriage for his son, invited his guests, and then sent out his servants, to call those who had been invited to the wedding, but "they would not come." He, therefore, most kindly "sent other servants," to press them to come, and "tell them that he had prepared his dinner—that his oxen and fatlings were killed, and all things were ready." But these guests made light of the message and invitation ; they treated it with neglect and contempt, and, instead of going to the feast, went each on his own business—"one to his farm, another to his merchandize: and the rest took his servants, and treated them spitefully, and killed them." This was not only shewing neglect towards the king, but daring and insolent contempt of his authority. When

therefore, he heard of the cruel way in which they had treated his servants, he was very angry, "and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." This is the first portion of the story.

Let us now see what our Saviour meant.

The King, is God the Father. Jesus Christ is His Son ; and the marriage of the King's Son is that day, when all Christ's people, who love and serve Him, shall be admitted to His glorious house of many mansions, "and sit with Him at His table in His kingdom." The preaching of the gospel is the proclamation of this marriage-feast, and it is good news, ("Godspel," in Saxon ;) but it is not *received* as good news, by many of those to whom it is sent, and it was not so received by those to whom it was first sent.

Now, this marriage has been *prepared* from the foundation of the world, and every true believer, from Abel downward, who has been truly penitent of his sin, and has

put his trust in God's mercy, through the sacrifice of the death of Christ, (who has been promised from the beginning,) will be a welcome guest at this marriage. The tidings of this marriage were sent especially to the Jews. They are those "who were bidden to the wedding." God "sent His servants, the prophets, first, rising up early, and sending them, but they would not hearken." He then sent out "His apostles last," to urge them to come. But "they made light of it;" some treated God's message with contempt: they "judged themselves unworthy of eternal life;" the things of this life were more to them, and better in their sight, than the joys of heaven. One cared more for his farm in the country, and another for his warehouse in the city, than for eternal life. It is right that we should "not be slothful in business:" we are "with quietness to labour and eat our bread;" but a farm is a poor exchange for a place in God's palace—and "the merchandize of gold," for a crown of

light, a robe of glory, a throne among the stars of heaven. "What shall it profit a man, if he were to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what could a man give in exchange for his soul?" To sell a birthright for a mess of pottage, is a poor exchange. And even poor, "profane," worldly-minded Esau, found how much he had lost, when there was "no place for repentance," no means of recovering what he had lost, "though he sought it carefully with tears."

The last portion of this Parable is plainly and desirably *personal*. It teaches us to look only and simply to *ourselves*. It tells us, that it is not enough for us to be "called,"—not enough for us to be among the invited guests—among those who have been "bidden to the marriage." It shews us, that we may be all this; and yet may be finally cast out in that day of scrutiny and searching enquiry, when the great King, who is now viewing the guests from His tower in the skies, shall "come in to *see the guests*."

We might, at first, think it strange, that when "He saw there a man not having a wedding garment," He should have treated him so severely, as to order him to be "bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness." But, when we once understand the custom and practice of Eastern nations, we shall have a key to unlock this difficulty, and open to us the full meaning and power of this latter portion of our Redeemer's striking Parable. When an Eastern king, or great person, sends an invitation to a marriage feast, he sends also the wedding-garment—a loose white robe to be worn over the other dress. A British officer, who had received such an invitation, having dressed himself in his uniform, went to the house of the noble who had invited him; and, when about to enter, was refused admission, 'I have been invited.'—'But you have not the proper dress.'—'I was not aware that any peculiar dress was needed.' 'But did you not receive a *dress*, when you received the *invitation*?' He then remembered that

a small parcel had been delivered at the same time that the invitation was brought to him—but he had not opened it. He went back—opened the parcel—and there was the dress. And according to the custom of the East, no greater insult or affront can be offered to the person, who has given the invitation, than not to put on the dress which he has sent. *This* custom explains the seeming severity of the King. When He sent His servants to gather in the wanderers and outcasts of the roads and hedgesides to share His feast, He either offered each then and there a wedding dress, or they might all have had one for the *asking* at His door, and of the proper officer. That guest, who came in in *his own dress*, whatever that was, had either refused to put on the dress given him, or had neglected to ask that one might be given him. He had thus thrown contempt upon his gracious Host,—had declared that he thought his own dress better than any that could be given him—had presumed to dictate to the King how

His guests should be clothed, instead of gladly putting on the clean white garment, freely provided, and freely offered to him. When, therefore, he was asked—"Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment," he was speechless—he *could* say nothing—he had nothing that he could say in excuse. Could he say—"I thought my own garments good enough." Who was to be the judge of that? himself, the poor invited guest, or the King, the gracious Inviter? Could he say—"I was too poor to buy one." Had he possessed the riches of the world, he was not allowed to *buy*, but simply asked to *accept*. He was not too poor to *put on* what was *given*, and *take* thankfully what was so thoughtfully *provided*. He therefore made no excuse; because he had none to make. His mouth was stopped—he was guilty before the King; and was justly treated with the loss of what he held too cheap, and thought of too lightly.

What will the unsanctified, the unholy,

the unrenewed spirit, be able to say, when "the King comes in to see His *Christian* guests? when He," "whom the heavens must receive till the time of the restitution of all things," shall enquire who have *received* the invitation, and who have truly *accepted* it? Who will be able in that searching day, to say, 'I *could* not obtain the white wedding garment? I *could* not get "the fine linen pure and white, the righteousness of the saints?" Who will be able to affirm, 'Thou didst invite me, indeed, to come, but never offeredst me that wherein I should come?' Who will be able, in that hour, to say, 'Thy servants bade me enter, but there was no dress offered to make me fit to enter? I thought that my own righteousness was sufficient—my own dress good enough.' Is there a Christian who never heard that promise, that cluster, that constellation of promises, that blaze of united promises, and invitations, and assurances,—“Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be

opened unto you ; for every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened ? ” Is there one, in whose ear the ministering servant, who went out into hedge and highway—street and lane—to “ *compel* men to come in, that God’s house might be filled,” did not tell that gracious assurance,—“ If ye who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children ; how *much more* shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to THEM THAT ASK ? ” Who will *then* say, ‘ I was too poor to buy the wedding garment ? ’ Were you too poor to ASK for that, which was offered “ without money, and without price ? ”

As surely as that guest was speechless, so surely will “ every mouth be stopped, and every tongue be guilty before God ; ” and that soul, which, having received the *invitation* to the marriage, had not on the *dress* for the marriage, will not be able to say. “ I *could* not obtain that *change of heart*, I *could* not gain that *renewal of my*

nature. I could not get the righteousness of God put upon me. I could not have the righteousness of Christ formed in me." But he must say, if he says anything, 'I WOULD NOT ASK.'

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